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Sons of the American revolution

NATURALIZATION OF ALIENS

IN

The United States

How to Become Citizens
What is Required
Rights and Duties

Prepared by the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution.

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NATURALIZATION OF ALIENS

IN

THE UNITED STATES

The object of this little paper is to tell those coming from foreign lands how they may become citizens of the United States. It will also tell something of the rights which come to those who do become citizens.

There are many reasons why the foreign-born person who comes here should wish to become a citizen. Some of these are: (1) Because there are rights which are given to a citizen which are not given to one who is not a citizen. In nearly all the States only citizens are allowed to vote or to hold office; and in a country governed by the people it should be the aim of everyone to take part in the choosing of the men by whom the Government is to be carried on. (2) If a man is going to make a home for himself and his family here, if he is going to earn his living here, it is a duty to his family as well as to himself to take part, if he can, in the Government by which his rights and those of his family are to be cared for.

Everyone who is born in the United States is a citizen, whether his parents were born here or not,

and whether they had become citizens of this country or not.

A foreign-born person is made a citizen by a proceeding in court. There are a great many courts where this can be done, and one or more will be found in every State. When a court has once made a man a citizen, he is a citizen in every part of the country, and will be accepted as a citizen on producing the papers given him in the court when he is naturalized. If this paper is destroyed or lost, a copy can be had from the court which gave the paper which has been lost.

One who wishes to become a citizen will want to know what will be required by the court which he asks to naturalize him. There are several things about which he has to bring evidence before the judge. The evidence must be statements made under oath by two persons who are citizens. The person who wants to be naturalized must show in this way:

1. That he has lived in this country for at least five years. It is not necessary that he should have lived all of that time in the same city or town, but he must have lived in this country all of the five years, and one year in the State where he asks the court to make him a citizen. If he has lived part of the time here and part of the time in the old country the court will refuse his application.

2. That he is a person of good moral character. This does not mean that he must have any particular religion, or even that he must be a member of

a church. It does mean that he must be a person who behaves himself, who does not steal, or cheat, swindle, or assault other people. It means that persons who break the laws are not looked on here as persons who will be good citizens and fit to make laws for people who obey the laws.

3. Evidence must also be given to the court by the person who wishes to be made a citizen that he believes in the form of government of this country. No man can believe in a thing which he knows nothing about. A citizen by his vote helps to govern the United States. It is necessary, therefore, that one who wishes to become a citizen shall know the way this country is governed. So one who does not know how this country is governed is not a proper man to have a part in the governing of it. He would not know how to use the rights of a citizen properly. It is not enough to know that there was once a man by the name of George Washington or to know the name of the man who is President at a particular time. One who wants to be a citizen should know how the laws are made, how the men who make them are chosen, and what officers see that the laws are obeyed.

4. Anyone who believes that there should not be any government at all can not become a citizen. Anyone who teaches or believes it is right to kill or try to kill, or shoot, or stab a man for no reason except that he is an officer of the Government can not become a citizen. In this country the people

choose their own officers, and in most cases for not more than four years. The officer is a servant, not a master, of the people. If he abuses his office, or if he uses his office to abuse the people, he can be removed by the courts, or the President, or the Governor of the State, or when his term ends the people can put some one else in his place. So there can be no excuse for trying to kill, shoot, or stab an officer because he is an officer.

5. To become a citizen a man must be able to speak the English language. He can become a citizen without this only when he is unable to talk at all, or when he has declared that he means to become a citizen and has settled on some of the land owned by the Government in the way the law provides.

At least two years before a foreigner applies to the court to make him a citizen, he must go before the clerk of the court and swear to a written statement that he means to become a citizen of the United States, but this statement does not, by itself, make him a citizen of the United States. At the time he applies to the court to make him a citizen he must have resided within the United States for at least five years, and for one year immediately preceding such application in the State in which he makes application. A foreigner may go before the clerk of the court and swear to a written statement that he means to become a citizen of the United States at any time after he reaches the age of eighteen years.

What are the results of being naturalized?

1. The naturalized citizen has the same rights in regard to property that one who is born here has; the same right to earn a living for himself and his family; to enjoy that which he has earned and which is justly his; the right to vote for the men who are to make the laws and the men who are to see that they are carried out. The naturalized citizen has just the same rights in the governing of the country as one who was born here.

2. He has the right to be appointed to any public position or employment for which he is fit, or to be chosen by the people to any office in the Government except that of President.

3. When a foreign-born man is naturalized, his wife, if she is a person who could herself be naturalized, and his children under twenty-one years of age become citizens also by his act, if they are in this country. They thus become entitled to the rights of citizens.

4. If a man has become a citizen of the United States and afterwards goes back to the old country on a visit, he will be protected by this Government from unlawful arrest, or from being put in prison, or punished unjustly. This does not mean that if he does wrong, or had done wrong before he came away, this Government would stop his being punished. It means that if he behaves as a good man, and had not done anything to be punished for before he left the old country, this Government will not let him be put in prison or punished without cause.

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The United States expects its citizens to live in this country, to work here and earn a living; to support and educate their children here. So if a man, having been naturalized here, goes back to the old country, or to any other foreign country, within five years after he has been made a citizen, to live there permanently, he is no longer considered a citizen of this country and loses his rights as a citizen here.

Is it not a great thing that one who comes from another land can become a citizen here, and have a vote which will count just as much as that of the President himself? Is it not a great thing that each foreigner coming here can have every right that anyone born in this country can have?

Is it not worth your while by your behavior and industry to do your best to obtain this right for yourself and your family?